



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 22, 2006

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HARTFORD AREA WEIGHS IN ON NATIONAL DISCUSSION ON HEALTH CARE

Citizens' recommendations to be considered by Congress, White House

Washington, D.C. – Residents of the greater Hartford area will participate in a community dialogue on health care in America presented by the Citizens' Health Care Working Group. The community meeting will be held on **Thursday, April 6th**, from 5:30 pm - 9:00 pm at the St. Thomas Seminary, 467 Bloomfield Ave, Bloomfield, CT. The meeting is free and open to the public, but registration is requested. Registration is available online at www.citizenshealthcare.gov. Onsite registration is also available.

This community meeting is one of more than 30 taking place throughout the nation. The meeting will feature a multimedia presentation that provides information on the nation's health care system including problems related to cost, quality, and access to care. Participants will engage in small group discussions and share ideas about how to improve the health care system.

Dorothy Bazos, Health Policy Consultant, Adjunct Professor at Dartmouth College and a member of the Working Group, offered that, "The meeting in Hartford is about listening. The Working Group invites you to tell us about the concerns you have with health care, about the benefits you need, how you think benefits should be provided and paid for, and how we as a public can work together to ensure affordable high quality health care for all Americans in the future. I invite the residents of the Hartford area to help us design the road map for health care that works for all Americans."

Community members, especially those unable to come to the meeting are urged to take advantage of several important online features designed to expand citizen participation beyond the community meetings. The Public Comment Center, Citizens' Blogs, and Discussion Forums, are found at www.citizenshealthcare.gov and were designed so that citizens can share their opinions with one another and make their views known to the Working Group.

"All around the country, the Citizens' Health Care Working Group offers ordinary people a chance to send a message to Washington about what we really need," stated Ted Steege, Health Care Consultant, Greater Hartford Interfaith Coalition on Equity and Justice. "Here in Greater Hartford we're glad to be part of this debate, which will help to shape the process of health care reform for decades to come. The April 6 meeting will help get our voices heard and further educate the public for the tough but exciting decisions ahead."

The Working Group, a nonpartisan group authorized by the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003, is charged with listening to the views of the American people and developing recommendations for the President and Congress to provide U.S. citizens with "Health Care that Works for All Americans." The *Health Report to the American People*, was released in October and serves as a basis to engage the American people in a dialogue on health care access, cost and quality issues. The Working Group consists of 15 members --14 citizens of diverse backgrounds from across the country, and the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

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